The Importance of Social Media in Changing Face of Indian Politics

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Abstract

Digital media is transforming how political parties communicate with voters, bridging gaps like never before. Given today's period of increasing social media usage and growing internet penetration as a result of increased smart phone usage on the one hand, and saturation of conventional mediums on the other, digital media provides the ideal platform for political parties to reach audiences globally. The usage of digital and social media expands the reach of communication efforts and allows for advocacy to be targeted and tailored to the audiences that marketers/campaigners are attempting to reach.

Keywords: Facebook; Indian Politics; Social Media; Traditional Media; Twitter.

INTRODUCTION

Social media had a significant impact in determining which party received the most seats. Facebook users have a huge influence on the results of elections in 160 of India's 543 seats. The cause for this is India's youth. According to one

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research, half of the population is under the age of 25. Second, 65 percent is younger than the 35 percent age group. This group is either a college student or a worker in a variety of businesses. IT firms, BPOs, research centres, and a variety of other industries, as well as entrepreneurs. Their hectic schedule has produced a schism between television and radio. This is especially true when gaining or exchanging knowledge. The young is technologically aware and enjoys being up to speed on current trends and subjects (Jordan Cook, 2013).[1] Such connectivity is available by using laptops, desktop computers, or the most popular network connected mobile phones.

Despite the fact that politicians still use posters, cut-outs, fliers, graffiti, and personal rallies to reach and win over voters, with social media changing the picture of urban India, political parties are

becoming tech savvy and realising that social media is the only way to reach out to the youth. A excellent example is Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was the first person to utilise social media to ascend to the position of great leader in India. Indians adore and bless him through social media, and his party became a big party in the 2014 and 2019 elections.

In the Delhi elections, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), a completely new political party, rose to power by soliciting funds and votes via social media. They not only received the necessary funds, but they also attracted a huge number of activists to promote their election campaign. Mr. Naveen Patnaik, CM of Orissa, owes a big portion of his political successes to his social media campaign. The youthful population, which accounts for 40% of his support base, is extremely sensitive to information flowing on social media. Mr. Nitish Kumar, the Chief Minister of Bihar, retained the same election campaign staff to handle his social media campaign (*Sarah Joseph*, 2012).[2] As a result, in the last five years, social media has become an essential component in determining the fate of numerous political parties.

Narendra Modi was among the first Indian leaders to use social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Google+. AAP utilized Pin storm to compare its performance against those of other parties. On social media sites, political party supporters engaged in hash tag battles. Three-fourths of AAP's social media contacts came from Twitter. The AAP used Twitter to broadcast all election campaign news, announcements, and key information. In just one month, AAP's popularity among social media users was demonstrated by the collection of 18 million dollars through the Invite Referrals campaign on social media platforms like as Twitter, Facebook, and mobile messaging apps such as WhatsApp. Aside from contributions, AAP was busy sending political messages on WhatsApp and responding questions on frankly.

Politicians are using Google+ Hangouts to reach out to voters. Market analysts predict that the upcoming general election in India in 2019 would be heavily influenced by political parties' social media presence and the brands they build for themselves (*Mohapatra*, 2013).[3]

The Indian Left parties, which have traditionally relied on the working and lower classes, as well as a segment of the educated middle class, are gradually being left out of the country's new emergent political discourse, thanks in part to social media.

In recent years, a growing number of politicians have used Twitter to spread their message. While Twitter is restricted to 280 characters, this appears to be a disadvantage for politicians. It compels individuals to condense their message into the fewest possible terms, resulting in better accuracy.

There is no better example of a politician fully utilising Twitter than Donald Trump's presidential campaign in 2016. Donald Trump, an outsider who had never held political office before, utilised Twitter in a way that generated breaking news. Because his tweets were restricted to 140 (at the time) characters, his message was not only seen by his followers, but the press used the full paragraph in their stories as well. Because Twitter allowed Trump's message to run unfiltered, it had a significant influence on voter involvement. Donald Trump's election as the first President in modern history who had never held public office or served as a military commander was aided in part by his use of Twitter to dominate the narrative. Today, he is increasing his usage of social media by releasing videos on YouTube that reach millions of people (*Das*, 2014).[4]

REASONS FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN INDIAN POLITICS

A simple method of disseminating information to a big audience. Many political parties utilise social media to solicit ideas for their electoral manifestos, solicit public opinion on their present performance, and so on. As a result, it binds individuals to the political party by instilling a sense of belonging and engagement.

The political party's work is promoted on social media, and individuals are urged to provide real time feedback. It also assists the party in communicating its aims and ideals, as well as providing a through review of the amount of work completed. It also pushes political politicians to speak more truth to voters rather than selling jargon during election speeches.

People who were formerly ostracised may now easily share their opinions to a large audience. This will provide the ground work for the development of new political alternatives and provide voters with more options. This will also increase responsibility for veteran political parties, since they may be given the door if they do not work. When compared to other types of information communication such as print or electronic media, social media has a cheap

cost (*Dwivedi*, 2011).[5] This opens the door for a huge number of participants who were previously unable to compete due to a lack of cash to compete in the race.

SOCIAL MEDIA HAS INFLUENCED INDIAN POLITICS

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube enable politicians to communicate directly with voters without paying a dollar. Using social media helps politicians to avoid the usual methods of reaching out to people, such as paid advertising or earned media.

According to the Financial Times, Narendra Modi is "India's first social media prime minister."Political campaigns are increasingly producing advertising and distributing them for free on YouTube instead of or in addition to paying for time on television or radio. Journalists covering elections will frequently write about such YouTube commercials, thereby spreading their message to a larger audience at no expense to the candidates.

When it came to utilising social media to debate political information, teenagers were at the forefront. Social media savvy politicians like Modi and Kejriwal took advantage of the chance and had a mind boggling influence on young voters, particularly first time voters. With their active engagement in social media platforms like as Facebook and Twitter, politicians and millennia's have a mutual influence on one another.

Politicians, like huge corporations, have exploited social media to promote their image. Every time Modi was set to speak at a political rally, for example, there was an update on Facebook and Twitter. Social media was also swamped with photographs of Modi and his campaign, as well as what he said at those rallies, cementing his image in the minds of users, many of whom were impressionable first-time voters. During the elections, he used this method to build an aura around his character.

During the elections, social media was able to circumvent traditional media outlets like as newspapers and television. Dedicated accounts and pages of the parties disseminated photographs, videos, and activities to digitally aware party followers on a constant basis via social media platforms. When they were on the run, they received up to the minute updates on their smart phones (Cisilin, 2013).[6]

Political Parties attempted to reach out to a large number of people and draw them into the political debate using Twitter and Facebook. In today's altered mainstream, the media is no longer the primary source of news for active social media users. Social media is an amazing tool for expressing oneself, sharing one's opinions, and raising awareness. Social media has evolved as a source of content for mainstream media to develop and construct stories around, not merely as a platform of free speech.

Twitter and Facebook have become important tools for campaign organisers. They make it simple for like-minded voters and activists to exchange news and information, such as campaign events. That's what Facebook's "Share" button and Twitter's "retweet" functionality are for.

Political campaigns may use a lot of information or analytics about the people who follow them on social media to tailor their messages to certain groups. In other words, a campaign may discover that a message that is acceptable for voters under 30 years old is not as effective with those over 60 years old.

Some campaigns have employed "money bombs" to raise significant sums of money in a short period of time. Money bombs are often 24 hour intervals during which candidates encourage their supporters to make monetary contributions. They spread the news using social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, and they frequently link these money bombs to specific topics that arise during elections. In the 2014 and 2019 Delhi elections, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) rose to power by soliciting funds and votes via social media.

Obtaining input from voters or constituents might be beneficial and, depending on how politicians react, it may be a very negative thing. Many campaigns pay workers to monitor their social media accounts for bad feedback and to delete anything unpleasant. A bunker attitude, on the other hand, might make a campaign look protective and walled off to the public. Modern day campaigns that are well-managed will engage the audience regardless of whether their response is good or negative (*Mark Granovetter*, 2005).[7]

The usefulness of social media lies in its instantaneity. Politicians and campaigns do nothing until they know how their policy declarations or movements will be received by the voters, and Twitter and Facebook both allow them to measure how the public is reacting to an issue or controversy in real time. Politicians may then adapt their campaigns in real time, without the need for pricey consultants

or polls.'

CONCLUSION

With millions of young voters participating in the electoral process, Indian democracy entered a participatory phase. One can only hope that this unprecedented involvement now leads to comprehensive empowerment. With the introduction of social media, the '*Aam Aadmi*' has gained unparalleled political empowerment and involvement. The youth are discussing about political concerns, which is a beneficial aspect of social media's growth. Previously, political debates were limited to those who read newspapers, watched news channels, or engaged in discussions in a village's nukkad or clubs. However, social networking has caused India's youth to sit up and address political concerns. In recent years, a substantial number of young people who have been affected by social media have become politically involved. They devote time to political analysis and debate. Women are voting in significant numbers as a result of this renewed enthusiasm.That is why Indian politicians have embraced social media since they know where and how to locate the country's youth in majority. One can observe a significant contrast in the strength of young in the recent Gujarat elections, when voting demographics were split between urban and rural voters. Needless to say, social media has had a significant impact on Indian politics.

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